

2003-04 Warm Water Fish Management Activity Report

Region 2 (Missoula)

Clearwater Chain of Lakes

Action

- Monitor illegally introduced northern pike populations and their impact on other species (has been ongoing for 10+ years).
- Evaluate and recommend stocking strategies and management actions such as pike control.
- Reviewing structures that pond up the river and create pike habitat. Recommending removal of an illegal structure and assessing others. Some structures create pike habitat but also limit their movement to other waters.

Results

- Lake Alva – Northern pike were not successful in establishing a self-sustaining population. Likely because of unsuitable habitat.
- Lake Inez – Northern pike populations are crashing. Other species, such as kokanee, cutthroat and yellow perch, are rebounding. Bull trout decline has been dramatic.
- Salmon – Northern pike populations are increasing after a post-boom decline. Prey species are currently recovering in association with the post-boom decline but are expected to decline in response to the latest increase in pike. Bull trout decline has been dramatic.
- Seeley Lake – Northern pike population is still growing. Other species remain suppressed. Bull trout decline has been dramatic.

Recommendations

- Continue to monitor population and community dynamics. Monitoring will be able to identify stages of boom and bust cycle of northern pike populations.
- Increase stocking kokanee and cutthroat trout in open water and determine their contribution to the creel. Monitor pike populations where stocking is increased to assess influence of stocking more prey.
- Do not implement active pike control until we know the northern pike population levels that represent equilibrium (i.e., neither a boom or a bust) and can identify more long-term predictions of their impact. A cost and biologically effective control method is not available. Seeley Lake is of concern since this populations is still growing.
- Monitor establishment of walleye that may have been introduced illegally.

Milltown Reservoir

Action

- Actively control northern pike populations by netting and reservoir drawdown.
- Monitor predation by pike on other species and effects of control methods on northern pike numbers and predation.

Results

- Past drawdowns and netting reduced pike numbers by 88% in 14 months.

Recommendation

- Continue to implement and evaluate control methods.
- Continue with drawdown as modification of habitat. This is probably the most effective means of control. Netting supplements drawdown but would not likely be successful on its own – pike are too fecund and lower numbers of spawners would likely be compensated for by higher survival of young.
- Control methods are successful at reducing predation.

Upsata Lake and Frenchtown Pond – establishing bass fisheries

Action

- Transferred largemouth bass (14 + inches) from Lee Metcalf Refuge to provide bass fishing opportunity.
 - Upsata Lake stocking was an attempt to stock bass in a lake with an overabundant population of prey (primarily yellow perch). Strategy is to stock bass to provide a trophy fishery and possibly reduce numbers and increase size of perch. Last stocked in 2001.
 - Frenchtown Pond stocking is to provide an urban fishery that relies on catch and release of larger largemouth bass. Last stocked in 2003.

Results

- Upsata is providing good bass fishing. Anglers report good catch of bass. Natural reproduction is likely.
- Frenchtown Pond had regulations changed in 2002 to protect larger fish from harvest. Positive reports from anglers.

Recommendation

- Evaluate other ponds or lakes that are traditionally managed as put-and-take trout fisheries but may naturally sustain largemouth bass instead of or

in addition to trout. Beavertail Pond trout fishery is being assessed to determine if trout are providing the optimal fishery in the water. If not, bass may be considered.

- Monitor success of Upsata Lake and Frenchtown Pond stockings.